

CLAIMS:

5 1. A control module for use in a computer chat system
which includes one or more first chat clients; one or more
second chat clients; and a chat server arranged to
establish an on-line conference between a first chat
client and at least one second chat client, by which
10 conference said chat clients may exchange messages for
rendering to respective client users, the control module
being arranged to participate in said conference in order
to receive messages from said chat clients, wherein upon
receipt of a message from a first chat client, the control
15 module is arranged to cause said received message to be
analysed in order to determine the nature of the message,
and is further arranged to cause a second chat client to
be selected depending on said determined nature and to
cause said message to be rendered by said selected second
20 chat client.

2. A control module as claimed in Claim 1, wherein in
respect of a first message received from a first chat
client, the control module is arranged to cause said
25 selected second chat client to join the conference and, in
respect of the, or each, subsequent message received from
said first chat client in respect of said conference, the
control module is arranged to cause said subsequently
received message to be analysed in order to determine the
30 nature of the message, and to cause an alternative second
chat client to be selected if the subsequently received

message is not suitable for rendering by the currently selected second chat client.

3. A control module as claimed in Claim 2, further
5 arranged to cause a selected alternative second chat client to join the conference and to cause said selected second chat client to leave the conference.

4. A control module as claimed in Claim 1, arranged to
10 cause messages received from said first chat clients to be classified, according to message content, into at least one of a set of message categories, wherein a second chat client is selected depending on the, or each, category into which a message is classified.

15 5. A control module as claimed in Claim 4, associated with a text analyser arranged to apply a set of one or more rules to the message content in order to produce said at least one message category.

20 6. A control module as claimed in Claim 1, further arranged to receive messages sent from said second chat clients, wherein, upon receipt of a message from a selected client, the control module is arranged to cause
25 said received message to be analysed in order to determine its suitability for rendering by a first chat client and, upon determining that said message is suitable, to cause at least one first chat client to render the message.

30 7. A control module as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the control module causes the received message from said

second chat client to undergo text analysis in order to detect words or phrases that are unsuitable for rendering by said at least one first chat client.

- 5 8. A control module as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the control module is arranged to participate in the on-line conference as a further chat client.

- 10 9. A control module as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each message is associated with a first flag for indicating whether or not the associated message is suitable for rendering by a chat client, wherein the control module is arranged to set the first flag to indicate approval for rendering.

- 15 10. A computer chat system including one or more first chat clients; one or more second chat clients; and a chat server arranged to establish an on-line conference between a first chat client and at least one second chat client,
20 by which conference said chat clients may exchange messages for rendering to respective client users, the computer chat system further comprising a control module as claimed in Claim 1.

- 25 11. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10, wherein each second chat client is associated with one or more message categories such that messages falling into at least one of said one or more message categories are appropriate for rendering by the respective second chat
30 client.

12. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 11,
wherein the or each message category associated with a
second chat client are dependant on the skills of the
respective client user.

5

13. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10,
wherein messages are associated with a second flag
arranged to indicate the source the message and wherein
the first and second chat clients are arranged only to
10 render messages for which the associated second flag
indicates that the message source is a second or first
chat client respectively.

14. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10,
15 wherein said second chat clients are arranged only to
render messages in respect of which the associated first
flag indicates approval for rendering.

15. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10,
20 wherein said first chat clients are arranged only to
render messages in respect of which the associated first
flag indicates approval for rendering.

16. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10,
25 further including a text analyser arranged to apply a set
of one or more rules to the message text in order to
produce said at least one message category.

17. A computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10,
30 wherein said on-line conference is established across the
Internet or other global computer network.

18. In a computer chat system including one or more first chat clients; one or more second chat clients; and a chat server arranged to establish an on-line conference between
5 a first chat client and at least one second chat client, by which conference said chat clients may exchange messages for rendering to respective client users, a method of on-line network communications comprising:
receiving a message from a first chat client, causing said
10 received message to be analysed in order to determine the nature of the message; causing a second chat client to be selected depending on said determined nature; and causing said message to be rendered by said selected second chat client.

15 19. A computer program product comprising computer usable code stored on a computer usable medium and arranged to implement, when executed on a computer, a control module as claimed in Claim 1.

20 20. A set of one or more computer program products comprising computer usable code stored on a computer usable medium and arranged to implement, when executed on a computer, a computer chat system as claimed in Claim 10.

25 21. A computer program product comprising computer usable code stored on a computer usable medium and arranged to perform, when executed on a computer, a method as claimed in Claim 18.

30